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THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF SOCIOLOGY.

THE proposition to be developed in this paper is that *the subject-matter of sociology is the process of human association*.¹

Ever since Comte proposed the name "sociology," and parallel with all subsequent attempts to give the term a definite content, one mode of attack upon the proposed science has been denial that it could have a subject-matter not already pre-empted by other sciences. This sort of attack has been encouraged by the seemingly hopeless disagreement among sociologists about the scientific task that they were trying to perform. If sociology has had anything to say about primitive peoples, for instance, it has been accused of violating the territory of anthropology and ethnology. If it has dealt with evidence recorded by civilized races, it has been charged with invading the province of the historian. If it has touched upon the relations of social classes in modern times, the political scientist or the economist has warned it to cease infringing upon his monopoly. Thus sociology has seemed to workers in other sciences either a pseudo-science, attempting to get prestige in their own fields by exploiting quack methods, or a mere collector of the waste thrown aside by the more important sciences. At the same time, sociologists themselves have unintentionally done not a little to confirm this impression. As has been hinted above, their failure to agree upon a definition of their

¹ Professor Ross implies precisely this view, though he does not directly declare it (AMERICAN JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY, Vol. IX, pp. 201 ff.).

science, or upon precise description of their task, has seemed to afford ocular proof that their alleged science was merely a name with no corresponding content.²

Has sociology a material of its own? Jealous friends of the older sciences promptly answer "No!" Friends of the new science as confidently answer "Yes," but they have not always been able to justify the answer to each other or even to themselves.

The formula adopted above is not an individual variation of the many alternatives already proposed as a fair field for a science of sociology. It is rather an interpretation of all the efforts, both within and without the older sciences, which have been prompted by a more or less distinct feeling that there are important reaches of knowledge about human conditions not provided for in the programs of the older sciences. Instead of leading to the conclusion that there is nothing to do which the older sciences do not properly attempt, if the heterogeneous labors of the sociologists are reviewed with a little care they furnish abundant evidence, both that there is unoccupied territory, and that these unsystematized surveys have each actually been doing some of the necessary work of plotting the ground. The proposition which we are now supporting is not that the sociologists ought to fix upon a new material as the subject-matter of their science. In fact, the sociologists have long ago instinctively fixed upon their material, and its distinctive character is gradually beginning to appear. The subject-matter upon which the sociologists are engaged is the social process as a whole. This is to be sharply distinguished, on the one hand, from mere knowledge of isolated phenomena, or classes of phenomena, that take place among men; and it is also to be distinguished from mere knowledge of immediate relations, that may be abstracted from the whole complex of relations which make up the entire fabric of human life. The

² The most recent betrayal of this judgment may be seen in a discussion of two papers by Mr. Victor Branford and Professor Durkheim on "The Relation of Sociology to the Social Sciences and to Philosophy" (*vide* AMERICAN JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY, Vol. X, pp. 134 ff. and 256 ff.). The differences of opinion and vagueness of view betrayed in the discussion fairly reflect the prevailing state of mind as to the subject-matter of sociology, even among persons who have given more than casual attention to recent sociological literature.

former kind of knowledge is description, narrative, story, tradition, that does not rise to the generality of science. The latter kind of knowledge may be organized into science of a certain order of generality. This has occurred, schematically at least, in the case of the accepted social sciences — ethnology, history, economics, etc. The sociologists are attempting to develop a general science, which will have relations to the special social sciences analogous with the relations of general physics to the special physical sciences, on the one hand, and to the various physical technologies on the other; or analogous with the relations of general chemistry to subdivisions of chemistry; or the relations of general biology to subordinate sections of biology.

Comparisons of this sort are so loose that they might easily prejudice the case under discussion. They are merely illustrations, necessarily inexact, but presenting certain instructive parallels. Let us suppose that, at a certain stage in the development of the science of physics, investigators had acquired considerable amounts of knowledge about groups of physical phenomena determined by relatively superficial marks. Let us suppose that one type of physicists had specialized upon gravitation, with the least possible attention to all other phases of physical phenomena. Suppose another type had in the same way confined attention to the phenomena of light; another, to those of magnetism; etc. Suppose that in each case the knowledge gained by such abstraction had been carefully systematized. This whole body of knowledge would doubtless have had a certain value. Obviously that value would have been narrowly limited, however, because such arbitrary isolation of things that are essentially related is possible only so long as insight into the real facts is rudimentary. Modern physics could not come into existence until, by some means or other, students of these things had learned to entertain the idea of the unity of their phenomena, resting in an underlying unity of substance manifesting the phenomena. That is, there could be only superficial arrangements of amateurish observation, not respectable science, until a unifying conception gave coherence to the details observed. Thus the conception of matter, and of the molar and molecular processes of matter, might have arisen after

a long history of such unconcerted specialization as we have supposed. These conceptions would presently serve as bonds of connection between the scattered workers. They would serve as clues to common interests between them. They would lead to meanings previously undiscovered in the phenomena, and they would promote further investigation of the phenomena. Thus, in place of desultory pursuit of knowledge about interesting physical facts, there would arise a science of physics. Although actual development of physics has not literally followed this order, the essential development has involved virtually the above stages. Consciousness of a subject-matter, on the one hand manifesting diverse phenomena, and on the other hand strictly delimited from other subject-matter, has been a precondition of a science of physics at once comprehensive and independent.

We may vary the form of the illustration in the case of chemistry. Suppose something like our present knowledge of chemical occurrences had grown up before there was any such generalization as "matter" or "atomic phenomena." Suppose some men had by some sort of intuition grouped the metals together, and had observed their behavior under different circumstances. Suppose others had studied salts, others acids, etc. Again we should have had a certain grade of knowledge, in a certain system of arrangement, but we should have had no science of chemistry. There must first have arisen a conception of an order of phenomena common to all matter, and conforming to laws varying merely in details according to the composition and circumstances of the particular portions of matter in question. Otherwise more or less interesting information about capriciously distinguished sorts of matter could never attain the dignity of a science of chemistry.

The like is true of biology, and the literal history of biology has perhaps more obviously conformed to the logical necessity we are citing than the history of physics or chemistry. The "natural history" still found in many schools, harks back to conceptions of the organic world which are logically neither more nor less respectable than the traditional English farmer's division of the animal kingdom into "game, vermin, and stock." No matter how

patiently one type of men studies plants, and another reptiles, and another fishes, and another birds, and another beasts, and so on, neither one nor all of them could go much beyond advertising the need of a biological science which did not exist. In order that dilettantish natural history might pass over into positive biology, it was necessary that all observation of living nature should submit to control by an antecedent conception of organic matter and laws of the variation of its phenomena. In a word, whatever the chronological order of occurrence of the ideas, all the concrete and special knowledge that goes to make up our present sciences has been unified at last around some central conception of subject-matter and appropriate method. We may express the fact for our present purposes in the formula: Physics is the science of matter in its molar and molecular processes; chemistry is the science of matter in its atomic processes; biology is the science of matter in its organic processes. In each case the comprehensive science has the task of organizing details which may already have been studied separately by several varieties of scholars. The same logical methods which have arrived at these generalizations make irresistibly toward the conviction that coherence and unity of knowledge about human experience demand *a science of men in their associational processes*. Many of these processes have long been studied in detail, but study of them in their correlations is, as in the case of chemical and vital processes, the work of a distinct order of science, with a peculiar object of attention. To the range of generalization which the needed general science comprehends in the present case the men who have most felt the need apply the name *sociology*.

Without referring to details which might further guard this summary comparison, our present interest is in the fact to be illustrated in the case of sociology. The phenomena presented by human beings have been studied in ways which are on the same logical plane with the treatment of organic phenomena by the obsolete types of "natural history." Not to mention the lesser social sciences, conventional history and economics and ethics, as represented by still extant types of thinkers, are sometimes as fragmentary and unvital and uncentered as a "science" of garden

vegetables or of draft horses would be, if not correlated with larger knowledge. The sociologists represent a protest against this situation. The protest has been long in developing out of the spontaneous, inarticulate stage. It is rapidly finding its voice. The formula which we are emphasizing expresses the implicit assumption of all the sociologists who are to be taken seriously. If they could, they would materially weaken the force of the names used to designate the conventional divisions of sciences pertaining to man. The past and present convenience of these names, and of the academic classifications for which they stand, is counterbalanced by the obstructions which they oppose to the progress of real knowledge. They interfere with discovery that all serious students of society are investigating phases of the same subject-matter. The supreme need in the human sciences at the present moment is to make out what that one subject-matter is, and how the different kinds of research are related to it. This central and circumferential reality appears to the sociologists as the associational process.

Wherever there are human beings there are phenomena of association. Those phenomena constitute a process composed of processes. There can be no convincing science of human life till these processes are known, from least to greatest, in the relation of each to each and to all. Knowledge of human life which stops short of this is at best a fragment, and at worst a fiction. Hence we assert that studies of selected phases of human affairs, no matter how ancient and awful the tradition that sponsors them, are logically in the class of pseudo-sciences, until they take their place within the plexus of sciences which together interpret the whole process of human association.

Men who call themselves by either of the names that signify attachment to either of the traditional divisions of knowledge, are at liberty to define their intellectual interests for themselves, and to shape their individual pursuits accordingly. Thus certain interests may posit a "science" of archæology; others, a "science" of epigraphy; others, a "science" of cartography; others, a "science" of numismatology; and so on, up to history and law and economics. Each type of men may cultivate their

peculiar section of knowledge as though it outranked every other kind of knowledge. Not group provincialisms, however, but the reality of objective relations, must determine at last, whether a selected portion of knowledge is relatively a fragment or a whole, relatively insignificant or important. No incident, phase, machinery, institution, product, stage, or program of human life, is central enough to clothe knowledge of it with more than the rank of a tributary science. The process that is taking place among men, through the ages and across the ages, is the largest whole of which men can have positive knowledge. This whole consequently fixes the goal of complete science of human life. No less than this whole is contemplated by the sociologist as his aim. He necessarily represents a desired generalization of knowledge which is farther than any other scientific program from actual or probable completion. Sociology thus defined is, and must remain, more a determining point of view than a finished body of knowledge. At the same time, and by virtue of both these sides of its case, sociology exposes the relativity and the partialness of any body of knowledge which comprehends less than the full sweep of the social process. Whatever be the appraisal of the fractional sciences in the subjective estimate of their promoters, the objective importance of each of them is measured by the kind and amount of tribute it can bring to knowledge of the human process as a whole.

These conceptions have been expressed in such general terms that repetition in less abstract form may not be superfluous. Wherever two or more human beings are within each other's ken, there is set up between them action and reaction, exchange of influence of some sort or other. That influence, on the one hand, molds the individuals concerned, tending to make, unmake, remake them without end; and, on the other hand, it composes those individuals into more or less rigid group-relationships, perhaps after having decomposed previous relationships to another group. This reciprocating process, growing infinitely complex as the circle of association widens, and as the type of individual becomes more and more evolved—including besides its form, the content of the process, first in the evolving objective conditions within which the

association takes place, second in the developing consciousness of the persons engaged in the process—this is the human reality, and all knowledge of human conditions is abortive in the degree in which it fails to fill out a complete expression of this reality.

Let us suppose the savage man A, and the savage woman B, of the horde X. Their wants are few. Food is plenty. B supplies it for A, who eats till he is satisfied and treats his food-getter with tolerable gentleness. But the food grows scarce. The horde breaks up into foraging pairs. A and B wander beyond their usual haunts, and encounter the savage man C of horde Y. They had never met before. To an impartial observer there is little to distinguish the savage A from the savage C. Up to date all the ferocity which we associate with the word "savage" may have been dormant in both. In each other's presence new factors of stimulation and response begin to operate. Each wants food. Each wants the woman. Each wants to eliminate the other. Treating the woman as merely a passive factor, we have in action rudiments of the universal process of association, viz., antithesis of individuals, stimulus of one by the other through the medium of common or conflicting wants, self-assertion by the opposing individuals, resulting reconstruction of the individuals themselves. That is, they fight, one prevails, and is transformed from a socially indifferent personality into a master; the other yields, and is transformed from a socially indifferent personality into a slave. The group is changed from a diad into a triad. Both A and B, we may suppose, become subject to C, while the relation of neither A nor B to C is precisely identical with the previous relation of A and B to each other.

This process of individual and group reaction, remaking both the individuals and the groups, extends from the savage group of two or more to the most comprehensive and complex group of groups which ultimate civilization may develop. It is incessant. It is perpetually varying. It is the main movement, within which migrations, race-mixtures, wars, governments, constitutions, revolutions, reformations, federations, civilizations, are merely the more or less important episodes, or situations, or factors. This whole process is the supreme fact within the reach

of human knowledge. It is the final interpreter of each and every lesser fact which may attract human attention. Since this process, from beginning to end, from component to completeness, in its forms and in its forces, in its origins, its variations, and its tendencies, is the subject-matter which sociology proposes to investigate, the relation of every other science to sociology is fixed, not by the dictum of any scientist, but by the relation which the subject-matter and the methods of other sciences bear to knowledge of the entire social process.

To make the point more precise, we may distinguish the work of sociology in turn from that of ethnology, of history, and of economics. Before passing to these specifications, or illustrations, we must provide for all necessary corrections of the personal equation. We will not assume, whether to the advantage or the disadvantage of either science, that any single man, still less a single fragment of his work, fairly represents the whole of his science. We will not even venture to assume that our use of the material to be cited for illustration gives all the credit due to the writer from which it is taken. His own views of the final correlation of that material with other subjects of knowledge may be quite unobjectionable. Our purpose is merely to illustrate the point that the same objective material may, in the form in which it appears in a given version of one of these sciences, have no interest for sociology whatever, or, on the other hand, it may be viewed in such relations as, at one and the same time, to furnish subject-matter for one of these sciences and also for sociology. To express the case from the point of view of desirability, as I see it, and of ultimate adjustment, as I predict it, there will presently be no apparently statical dualism or multipleism between the subject-matter of the other human sciences and sociology. When every student of human life realizes that the reality which he tries to know is a one, not a many, each will regard the material of his immediate science, not as belonging to his science *instead of* belonging to another science, but as being to some extent the common material of several sciences, or at most as held in trusteeship by his science for its final use in the complete science.

In this spirit I would cite for illustration, first, the little book, Deniker's *The Races of Man*.³ The author states his purpose as follows: "My object . . . has been to give . . . the essential facts of the twin sciences of anthropology and ethnography." (Preface). In carrying out this purpose a chapter each is devoted to the following subjects: "Somatic Characters;" "Morphological Characters;" "Physiological Characters;" "Ethnic Characters;" "Linguistic Characters;" "Sociological Characters" (a chapter each on "Material Life," "Psychic Life," "Family Life," and "Social Life"); "Classification of Races and Peoples;" "Races and Peoples of Europe;" "Races and Peoples of Asia;" "Races and Peoples of Africa;" "Races and Peoples of Oceania;" "Races and Peoples of America."

Without passing judgment upon the expressed or implied correlations in which the author views this material, we may repeat our abstract propositions in terms of the particulars which he schedules. If there be a science or sciences that are content to discover, describe, compare, and classify such details as these, and *therewith to let the matter rest*, such sciences may be credited with a preserve of their own, from which sociology holds itself unconcernedly aloof. With these details, simply as details, or merely as foils reciprocally to display each other as curiosities, sociology has no manner of interest. If the items thus considered are the subject-matter of any science, sociology is not likely to disturb either its possession or its title.

On the other hand, every one of these details has occurred somewhere along in the course of the process in which rudimentary men and rudimentary human associations evolve into developed personalities and complex associations. With the whence, and the how, and the why, and the whither of this process sociology is supremely concerned. If any of the details in question can be brought into such visible relation with this social process, and in the precise measure in which they can be made to shed light upon the process, they come within the ken of sociology. Thus the most spectacular detail, like a racial peculiarity, or a ceremonial anomaly which remains unaccounted for, may be the chief

³ London, 1900.

pride and the center of attraction in an ethnological museum. It would have no value at all for sociology. If, however, it could be made to yield never so slight evidence about the facts, or the forms, or the forces, or the conditions, or the laws of the social process, to just that extent it would come to be the common material of sociology and of the science which exhibits it in the museum.

In the same way we may distinguish between the object of attention in sociology and the subject-matter beyond which certain types of mind do not pry in studying history.⁴ Let us refer to one of the most respected among English historians. In his *Constitutional History of England*, Vol. I, chap. ix, "The Norman Conquest," Bishop Stubbs presents the subject under the following minor titles: "Complex Results of the Conquest;" "State of Normandy;" "Growth of Feudalism;" "Feudal Ideas

⁴ As I have implied above, the point of view which we are explaining assumes that when studies of the social reality are properly centered, we shall no longer speak as though the ethnologists were studying one thing, the historians another, the economists another, the sociologists another, etc., etc. We shall perceive that, if we are using a valid method, so far as we are actually contributing to real knowledge, rather than practicing an art, or indulging in play, we are in fact all studying the same thing. Our particular task will require primary attention to certain fragments or aspects of the one thing. It will always be understood, however, that our results have to be completed by assimilating, within the entire report, the whole made up by correlation of the results of all research. Accordingly I am trying to avoid a use of language which carries the old implications. I do not want to say, "ethnology deals with this subject-matter, history with that, economics with the other, etc." I want to say rather that certain material with which historians concern themselves may be treated by the historians in such a way that it satisfies no general human interest, and for that reason has no value for the sociologist. That same material may be treated by other historians in such a way that, so far as it goes, it both explains and is explained by the whole social process. If the former occurs, there is no fellowship between such historians and the sociologists. If the latter is the case, the names "historian" and "sociologist" would be appropriate merely as indicating where the two types of scholars respectively place the primary emphasis in their work. The historian would be he who puts most stress upon discovering the facts of past situations. The sociologist would be he who puts most stress upon the correlation of these facts with knowledge of the social process in general. This line of cleavage between types of historians was brought out very clearly in a discussion at the joint meeting of the American Economic Association and the American Historical Association at New Orleans, December, 1903 (*vide Proceedings of the American Economic Association*, Third Series, Vol. V, No. 1, Part II).

of the Conquest;" "National Policy of William;" "Introduction of Feudal Usages;" "Maintenance of Old Forms;" "Results of Changes of Administrators;" "Subordinate Changes: in Judicature, in Taxation, in Ecclesiastical Affairs;" "Transitional Character of the Period."

We are citing an author who is among the least liable to the charge of belonging to the former of the two types just indicated.⁵ We are not criticising his work, but abstracting from it, for purposes of illustration, a series of familiar topics which may be treated by either of two contrasted methods. On the one hand, if the items in the series were treated by the one type of historian, a minimum of relationship would appear between either of them and the others, or anything else. Each topic would be discussed very much as a landscape painter snatches from an environment an "effect" and puts it on canvass. Volumes full of such detached, impressionistic sketches would go no farther toward making a science of history than an equal bulk of description of detached pieces of rock, culled from different parts of the world, would go toward making a science of geology. No one with the least impulse toward generalization can imagine that information of that fragmentary sort is science. It may be worth getting for other purposes than science, and individuals may be as well within their rights in busying themselves with this sort of litter, as those who really devote themselves to science. In itself, left in the uncriticised, unorganized, heterogeneous condition of facts set side by side, with no discrimination of relative worth, information about the past is of no more scientific value than the same number of miscellaneous items in the newspaper today.

In the modern literature classed as "history" we accordingly find quaint and curious information in all stages of organization, from a minimum to a maximum of coherence. Our argument is that sociology has no part nor lot with the type of history which is content to find out facts *and there rest its case*. Like all genuine science, sociology is not interested in facts as such. It is interested only in relations, meanings, valuations, in which facts reappear in essentials. One fact is worth no more than another, if its corre-

⁵ *Vide* note, p. 291.

lation with other facts is concealed. On the other hand, every fact in human experience has a value of its own as an index of the social process that emerges in part in the fact. In so far as the historian hunts down facts for the purpose of finding the social process revealed in the facts, his interest is identical with that of the sociologist. The difference between them is again merely a difference of greater or less attention to different steps of one and the same approach to knowledge of the social reality. We might imitate a verbal distinction familiar in a related field, and say that as 'ethnography is to ethnology, so is historiography to historiology. I would by no means concede that the subject-matter of sociology is confined to the past. It is still more concerned with interpretation of the social process in the present. This term "historiology" is suggested as a synonym for one segment of the arc of sociology, and merely as a temporary expedient in this particular part of the argument. To point the contrast between mere discovery of details of past experience, and the work that the sociologists want to do, we may fairly call the former historiography and the latter historiology.⁶

The real progress of the historians toward promotion of science is not in the line of which many of them have recently grown so proud. History does not become more scientific by shifting its attention from relatively insignificant kings and soldiers to equally insignificant common folks. History becomes scientific in proportion as it advances from knowledge of details toward reconstruction of the whole in which the details have their place. The sociologists have entered the field of social science with a plea for a fair share of attention to that correlation of knowledge, notorious neglect of which has thus far been the paradox of our era of "inductive science."

Recurring to the titles from Stubbs, we may add that investigation of such details may, and indeed must, proceed in the first instance with severe disregard of collateral details. The test of historical work, however, is not where it begins, but where it ends. It is a misconception of fact and a misuse of terms to speak of any

⁶ All this has been anticipated and stated so conclusively by Professor Ross that there remains little room for discussion. (*Vide loc. cit.*, pp. 194 ff.)

program that begins and ends with details as "scientific." Historiography as such is not science; it is merely a technique. The output of that technique is raw material of science. There is no more scientific value in knowing merely that William the Conqueror, or William the Red, or any of their successors in past centuries, did this or that, than there is in knowing what Edward VII. and the Kaiser did on their yachts at Kiel last summer. We do not reach science till we advance from knowledge of what occurred to knowledge of the meaning of what occurred. On the side of the meanings of occurrences, whoever follows connections as far as they can be traced, whether he calls himself historian or sociologist, pursues the essential sociological interest.⁷

⁷ Tarde charges both historian and sociologist with attention to the particular in disregard of the general. For instance, he says that physicists, chemists, and physiologists "show us the subject of their science only on the side of its characteristic resemblances and repetitions; they prudently conceal its corresponding heterogeneities and transformations (or transsubstantiations)." He then alleges a contrast in the case of the social sciences as follows: "The historian and sociologist, on the contrary, veil the regular and monotonous face of social facts—that part in which they are alike and repeat themselves—and show us only their accidental and interesting, their infinitely novel and diversified, aspect. If our subject were, for example, the Gallo-Romans, the historian, even the philosophical historian, would not think of leading us, step by step, through conquered Gaul in order to show us how every word, rite, edict, profession, custom, craft, law, or military manoeuvre, how in short every special idea or need which had been introduced from Rome, had begun to spread from the Pyrenees to the Rhine, and to win its way after more or less vigorous fighting against old Celtic customs and ideas, to the mouths and arms and hearts and minds of all the enthusiastic Gallic imitators of Rome and Caesar. At any rate, if our historian had once led us on this long journey, he would not make us repeat it for every Latin word or grammatical form, for every ritualistic form in the Roman religion, for every military manoeuvre that was taught to the legionaries by their officer-instructors, for every variety of Roman architecture, for temple, basilica, theater, hippodrome, aqueduct, and atriamed villa, for every school-taught verse of Virgil or Horace, for every Roman law, or for every artistic or industrial process in Roman civilization that had been faithfully and continuously transmitted from pedagogues and craftsmen to pupils and apprentices. And yet it is only at this price that we can get at an exact estimate of the great amount of regularity which obtains in even the most fluctuating societies." *The Laws of Imitation*; English by Parsons, New York, 1903, pp. 8, 9. Whether Tarde is right or not in grouping historians and sociologists equally under this censure, our point is substantially the one that he makes: viz., that knowledge does not pass from scraps into science until its regularities are recognized and their laws discovered. The sociologists rather than the historians are making the fight for use of this theorem in the social sciences.

Happily it is impossible for the most atomistically minded historiographer utterly to overlook the pointings of each event or situation toward connections with other events and situations. Even a list of topics like the one we have cited at random testifies of this necessity. "Results," "state," "growth," "policy," "introduction," "maintenance," "transitional," are all terms of relationship. Moreover, the relationships implied are not merely those of nearness in time or space, nor of series. They are relationships of working-with, of process. This process may be contemplated merely within an arbitrarily restricted area; *e. g.*, causes and effects so far as they appear in contrasts between the before and the after of relations of classes, of economic systems, of constitutional principles, of legal enactments, of social customs, of religious conventions *in a certain population*. In this case there is rudimentary, but narrowly restricted, recognition that specific knowledge gets its value by correlation with other knowledge. The interest of the historian converges toward that of the sociologist in the precise degree in which the former desires to advance from knowledge of occurrences as such, not merely to their immediate correlations, but to their last discoverable meanings as indexes of the whole process of social evolution. At one extreme is sheer interest in bare details. At the other extreme is interest that rates everything short of dynamic interpretation of the details as mere preliminary.

The same distinction may be stated in terms of discrimination between the economic and the sociological interest. Again, it should be urged with all emphasis that every use of words which implies an exclusive division of subject-matter among the social sciences is merely a convenient concession to a condition which the progress of science should at least mitigate. As we have said above, from the sociological view-point different workers in the social sciences are not working on different kinds of material. They are merely carrying on different divisions of labor upon one material. That material is human experience in general. The total purpose of social science, up to the point where it ceases to be mere knowledge and begins to pass over into power, is to discover the meanings of human experience. Our present illustration

should bring out another real difference between degrees of approach toward this end.

In his *Grundriss der allgemeinen Volkswirtschaftslehre*,⁸ Book II, chap. vii, Professor Schmoller draws the outlines of a description of modern forms of industrial enterprise. His subtitles are as follows: "The Conception of Industrial Enterprise (*Unternehmung*);" "Its Starting-Points, Trade, Labor, Community, Family;" "The Development of Rural Economic Enterprise;" "Hand Labor;" "Movements in the Direction of Larger Enterprises and Organizations in Community and Corporate Form up to 1800;" "Domestic Industry (*das Verlagssystem*);" "Modern Enterprise, Wholesale Business, the Factory;" "The Social Problem of Large Business;" "Public Stock Companies;" "The Newer Economic Associations;" "The Combinations of Traders and Promoters, Syndicates, Rings, and Trusts;" "Conclusion, Bird's-eye View of the Social Constitution of Industry, Particularly of Capitalistic Enterprise."

Instead of selecting our illustration from economic topics which are extremely fractional, as it would be easy to do, we prefer to take specimens of a sort more representative of recent tendencies. In the above titles we have references to economic phenomena of highly developed and complex types. Correlation of most intricate nature is implied in all such analyses. Can there be any room in the premises for any scientific interest distinct from and in addition to the economic interest? The answer depends entirely upon the extension which the economists claim or allow for their interest. As in the case of the historians, the subject-matter may be so defined as to merge the economic interest at last completely with that of the sociologist.⁹ On the other hand,

⁸ Third edition, Leipzig, 1900.

⁹ For a striking illustration of the tendency among recent economists to see these things essentially as the sociologists see them, *vide* SOMBART, *Der moderne Kapitalismus*, Vol. I, Introduction, pp. xxv ff. Professor Sombart is not directly discussing the relationship which we have in mind. His argument virtually amounts to a special application of the general principle which we are formulating, *i. e.*, to know any economic relationship fully, its connections have to be traced with the whole process of human activities. Thus: "Was nämlich von dem Wirtschaftstheoretiker der Zukunft verlangt werden wird, sind wieder *lange*

the economic interest may be so circumscribed that attention is restricted to an economic mechanism merely as such, an endless chain composed of the main links, capital, labor, production, consumption. In proportion as this latter is the case, the economic activities of life are wrested by an intellectual *tour de force* from the real social process, and are looked upon as an entity sufficient unto itself. From the sociological view-point, economic activities are merely a division of the manifestations of the human process as a whole. That process begins with the power of individuals to feel wants, and to act in response to the stimulus of wants. It continues through limitless cycles of differentiation of wants, of individual types characterized by variations of wants, of groupings of individuals incidental to effort to satisfy the wants, and of institutions and other achievements deposited in the course of this incessant endeavor. To the sociologist every type of individual, every combination of activities, every institution, whether economic, political, artistic, scientific, or religious, is of interest, not for its separate self, but so far as it can shed or reflect light about the articulations and the motivations of the process as a whole, in which each detail in its own degree is an incident. Without involving ourselves in a boundary dispute with the psychologists, we may repeat that the sociological interest begins with individuals feeling wants. How do those wants bring them into contact with other individuals feeling wants? How do the individuals thus in contact modify each other's wants? How do the wants of the separate individuals become a species of environment, conditioning all the individuals? How does the reaction between the elements, *i. e.*, individuals, physical environment, and social environment, become complex, and ever more complex, in the progressively varying reaction of cause and effect within the combination? How do types of want, and of individual and social contact, and of environment result from the different stages of this process? What significance, at any stage of the process, have

Gedankenreihen, die heute ganz aus der Mode gekommen zu sein scheinen. Der Theoretiker von heute bästelt fast immer ein beobachtetes Phänomen an die nächstliegende Ursache an, wenn er es nicht vorzieht, durch Messung an einem bereitgehaltenen (meist ethischen) Massstabe seiner Herr zu werden, etc., etc."

details, or groups of details, or systems of details, as means of interpreting the process? Thus, from the sociological point of view, either a group of economic facts, or the economic system of an age or a civilization, or the economic theory of a culture epoch, is each in its way merely a term in the whole proposition which sociology is trying to formulate. The human interest is in knowing the human whole. The sociologists have broken into the goodly fellowship of the social scientists, and have thus far found themselves frankly unwelcome guests. They have a mission, however, which will not always be unrecognized. Their part in the whole work of knowing the human reality is to counteract the tendency of specialists to follow centrifugal impulses so far that social science will split into fragments which cannot be reorganized into a unified body of knowledge. Sociology stands first for the co-ordinating stage in the knowing process. Recognition of its legitimacy and its necessity is merely a question of time.

To recapitulate: the sociologists are attempting to show that salvation of the social sciences from sterility must be worked out, not by microscopic description and analysis of details alone, but by such correlation and generalization of particulars that the whole social process will be intelligible. The limits of this paper restrict discussion to that phase of sociological theory in which intellectual apprehension is uppermost. From the human standpoint no science is an end in itself. The proximate end of all science is organization into action. The ultimate interest of the sociologists, therefore, is in turning knowledge of the social process into more intelligent promotion of the process.

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